

JUNIOR COLLEGE RECOGNITION DINNER

Sheraton Motor Inn

Jackson, Mississippi

June 15, 1971

by

J. M. Ewing

President Branch

Director Moody

Dr. Johnston

Honorees and their Wives

And, Junior College Friends:

Thank you, Mr. Branch, first, for inviting me to speak on this occasion; and second, for your kind and generous introduction...

Thank you again, Frank, for permitting me to get ahead of L. O. Todd and J. B. Young. I have been trying to top Todd for forty years, and this is my first night of success. He even beat me to retirement by thirty-one days. Of course, no one has ever known whether he was ahead of J. B. or not. He's always played his cards so close to his chest, or under the table, that you couldn't tell from his "poker face" what he was thinking or planning, but you always knew it was in the interest of Jones County Junior College.

To turn me loose to speak at a junior college function is dangerous business. Maggie and I spent twenty-eight happy years at Copenh-Lincoln Junior College, in addition to six previous years in vocational agriculture and doing janitorial service for Russell Ellzey. I could spend the entire evening extolling the virtues of Mr. Ellzey.



I owe a great debt to my dear friends, General Pat Wilson and Senator John Stennis, for providing me the opportunity of going to Co-Lin. Mr. Ellzey made the hazardous trip by automobile from Wesson to A & M College in 1922 for the express purpose of employing Pat, who had already accepted a job in Tupelo. With an afternoon on his hands, Russell went out to see A & M and Alabama play a crucial and exciting baseball game. As Head Cheerleader, it was my responsibility to rattle the Alabama pitcher and hitters with what today would be classed as unsportsman-like cheering. My assistant cheerleader, John Stennis, had the more gentlemanly assignment of cheering our team to play their best. John was successful-- A & M won the game.

Sitting in the bleachers, Russell told Shorty Pittman, "If that boy doesn't have any more sense than to make a fool of himself to win a ballgame, I don't have any more sense than to hire him." Thus began a friendship more than forty-nine years ago between Russell and Jimmie Ewing that will last throughout their lives.

I must admit that, by 1927, my job was in jeopardy; but when, on June 1, 1927, I persuaded Mr. Ellzey's former student, Maggie Flowers, to become "Mrs. Jimmie," I had it made. But this is not an evening for personal testimony.

During the first legislative session of the late Governor Bilbo's second term, a miracle happened to Mississippi public education. It would be impossible to include all who had a part, and I must single out only five men. Four were stalwart A.H.S. administrators, and

the fifth was that great "Home, School, and Church" educator, the State Superintendent of Education, W. F. Bond. The four, in the order of their physical stature were (1) M. P. Bush, of Jones County A. H. S.; (2) J. S. Vandiver, Sunflower County A. H. S.; (3) Russell Ellzey, Copiah-Lincoln A. H. S.; and (4) Knox M. Broom, A. H. S. Supervisor. How these men got a junior college law passed--almost as modern as today's newspaper--with an \$80,000 junior college appropriation, through a legislature controlled by the "Big Four" from Adams, Bolivar, Lauderdale, and Leflore Counties, is an unequalled educational phenomenon. The most accurate account will be found in the Junior College History, authored by Knox Broom.

I must say a few words about those four A. H. S. men. M. P. Bush probably never earned a college degree, and, yet, he was a visionary leader and an educational giant. J. B. learned a lot of his "slick" moves from him. J. S. Vandiver finally earned a Bachelor's degree while serving as a junior college president. He believed that strict discipline developed character and that digging stumps was good for the soul, as attested by Dr. Bill McCain, one of his A. H. S. students. Russell Ellzey earned a B. A. degree from Mississippi College at an early age and had six weeks' graduate study at the University of Chicago. He was a master in creating school spirit and challenging students and teachers to their greatest potential. Knox Broom was a visionary philosopher in ideas and ideals far ahead of his time. He earned the A. B. degree from Millsaps and the M. A. from the University of Chicago.



For the record and because of their contributions during the "borning" days of their junior colleges, I must mention others who served as the first President of their respective institutions. From, and after 1928, they were: B. F. McLaurin, Coahoma; R. C. Pugh, East Central; J. D. Wallace, East Mississippi--the "blind wizard"; R. E. L. Sutherland and G. J. Cain, Hinds; M. C. McDaniel, Holmes; P. A. Sheffield, Itawamba; H. M. Ivy, Meridian; R. O. Stringer, Northeast; Porter Berry, Northwest; S. L. Stringer, Pearl River; Lee Denson and C. J. Darby, Perkinston; J. M. Kenna, Southwest; and J. D. Boyd, Utica.

During the forty-three years since 1928, many others have served with distinction as presidents of the sixteen public junior colleges. As I recall, there have been eight different persons to serve as Junior College Supervisor or, under the new title, as Director. These fine men have all made outstanding contributions to the program. I shall dare to list these from memory as Knox Broom (three different times); Kirby Walker; Bob Anderson; Jack Travis; J. C. Windham (Interim Supervisor); B. L. Hill (who had the longest consecutive tenure of service); F. M. Fortenberry, Director; and George V. Moody, Director.

All here recall the fact that each of the present junior colleges was an outgrowth of an A. H. S., with the exceptions of Meridian, Northeast, and Utica. Over the years there was a total of fifty-one Agricultural High Schools. Some five of these offered subjects for college credit, but never developed into a junior college.



As one looks back over forty-three years in retrospect, many activities and innovations have made significant impacts. Competition in athletics has created wholesome rivalries and developed school spirit. For many years there was competition, not only in sports, but also in (1) academic examinations; (2) debate; (3) oratorical contests (male and female); and (4) music - piano solos and duets, vocal solos (male and female), and quartets (male and female). Points were awarded for the first five winners. Each major sport--football, boys' and girls' basketball, and baseball--counted ten points, with six points for second place. Debate counted ten and six points.

In late April or early May, there was a state-wide Field Meet, with platform events in the morning, and boys' and girls' track in the afternoon. At this meet all points accrued for team sports, each of some twenty-five literary examinations, each platform event, and, finally, points-by-event for the Track Meet were totaled. Winners were announced for points scored in (1) each major sport; (2) literary examinations; (3) platform events; and (4) finally, the Track Meet. Individual winners received a medal; group winners were awarded a trophy; and the winner of the Annual Field Meet was awarded a large loving cup. Sometimes the winner of the cup was determined by the last event of the Track Meet, the boys' one-mile relay. All this created a bunglesome record system, but anyone who has attended a final Field Meet, and won, has had a thrill equal to winning a World Championship.



The first Junior-Senior College Conference was called by President Duke Humphrey, of Mississippi State, in 1934. This conference was probably the most productive meeting ever held for Mississippi Junior Colleges. The President of Mississippi State, all of the Deans, the Registrar, and many Department Heads met with Junior College Presidents, Deans, and Registrars in the Y.M.C.A. Most curriculum and transfer problems between State and the junior colleges were resolved.

Dr. Humphrey gave a report of this conference at the next Presidents' Council meeting. The next year all public junior and senior institutions were included; then all institutions--public and private, junior and senior--were invited. These conferences are still held each year, but I regret to say that, in my opinion, they have developed into just another convention.

In 1938, L. O. Todd and one or two other junior college men attended a summer session at Peabody College. They presented the idea to Dr. Doak Campbell of having a group of junior college teachers come to Peabody to discuss various curriculum problems. Doak, the Graduate Dean, and other Peabody officials liked the idea and secured a grant from the G. E. B. to pay the expense of attending faculty. In 1940, some thirty junior college teachers, plus administrators, met at Peabody for a six-week term. Knox Broom, Junior College Supervisor, directed the program. The term "workshop" had not yet been invented, and the program was titled: A Laboratory for the Improvement of Instruction; and this is exactly what it was.



So far as is known, this was the first time a group of college teachers had spent six weeks together, studying curriculum programs and working cooperatively to produce courses of study. In 1941, the Mississippi group was a part of the Terminal Education Workshop held at Peabody as one of three such programs in the United States, sponsored by the "Commission on Junior College Terminal Education." The war interrupted these programs, but Mississippi Junior Colleges had scored another FIRST in this area.

The end of the war and returning veterans ushered in a new era for the junior colleges. Enrollment soared to an all-time high; disciplinary standards underwent about as drastic a drop, comparatively speaking, as we have experienced the last five years. The \$300 G. I. fees paid by the government for each veteran brought in thousands of dollars in new money.

It makes an interesting story how the junior college people played the veterans' enrollment with the Governor and legislative leaders. We asked for substantial increase in State appropriation to teach the thousands of G. I.'s. When veteran enrollment was reduced, we asked for increased appropriations to replace the \$300 fee we had been getting.

Surplus property was plentiful, though much of it was obsolete.

We heard that there were 102 Navy steel barrack buildings at Gulfport ready for overseas shipment. Two carloads of us left Jackson in a freezing, misty rain one evening at five o'clock and met for coffee at the Lamar Hotel in Meridian. When our car got there, J. B. was on



the phone making a train reservation to Atlanta. He said, "I won't even ride out of Meridian in a car driven by Lindsey Todd." We took him in our Chevrolet, and all made it to Atlanta by daylight. We got the buildings, but soon found we had no money for moving them, much less for erecting them. Since we had twice as many as we needed, a deal was made with the Building Commission to give half of the buildings to them for the State senior colleges; the Commission then moved the packaged barracks to the various campuses and gave each college \$52,000 to erect one building. This, also, was a FIRST. It marked the beginning of State appropriated funds for capital improvements. The building appropriation has increased from that \$52,000 each for the biennium, to the 1971 figure of \$6,000,000; an average of \$375,000 for one year-- $14\frac{1}{2}$  times as much.

Probably the most phenomenal accomplishment you have ever achieved has been in the areas of vocational and technical education.

Although provided for in the Laws of 1928, there was neither the money, the leadership, nor the demand for the product prior to the State's industrialization program. I might add, parenthetically, that I, personally, was one of those who helped to provide the "dirth of leadership." It is an established fact that industrial development in this State would be completely stymied without the flow of your skilled craftsmen and your technological graduates.

Now, I should like the privilege of looking toward the future, as well as boring you with a bit of "Knox Broom-type" philosophy. The future of Mississippi Junior Colleges is as bright as their leadership.



Those who sired the institutions you represent were truly aggressive and dynamic, but they could not be called unselfish. They knew that the A. H. S. had been, or would inevitably be, replaced by a consolidated school or a junior college.

Some forty years ago S. L. Stringer published an article quoted widely throughout the nation titled "Mississippi Junior College Birth Control." It was not "Simon-Pure." It was a fortunate happenstance that the geographical location of the strong leaders was fairly well distributed over the State. The dynamic personality of the A. H. S. Superintendent, rather than geography, determined junior college birth control.

Much more than in a senior college or university, the success of a junior college will almost invariably be dependent upon the courage, vision, energy, dedication, and character of the President.

Financially, you are more independent than ever in your forty-three-year history, because you are, in Knox Broom's language, the "Peoples' College." You are close to the legislators. With equal vigor, you must push your sources of local revenue. In my judgment, the most tragic occurrence in Mississippi Junior College history would be for the State to fully finance your institutions. State finance would inevitably result in State control. One of your greatest strengths is that you are local colleges, very largely under local control. Keep it that way!



I think this can be said without betraying a confidence. The Presidents' Council, representing the eight senior institutions, is ready, even now, to sit down with you to discuss finance.

Fifteen years ago last March, Frank Branch invited me to speak at your sectional meeting of MEA. I presumed to say that you must pay higher salaries to your better teachers. I suggested then, and reiterate now, this can be done by expending a larger percent of your income on instruction, by raising your fees, and by increased local tax support. At Delta State, we have had more than our average share of junior college transfers. Our studies have indicated that, by and large, your students have been well prepared, academically, because good teachers produce good students; but good teachers are worth far more than you are paying.

To say, "Administrators of all schools and colleges are in the midst of perilous times," seems trite. As we look to the future, there seems to be no immediate relief. A very vast majority of the college students in this State represent the finest of American youth. If you meet their needs, they will make you proud. My own philosophy has been to expend every effort to stay ahead of them. The Judeo-Christian heritage, the American Free Enterprise System, and the traditional constitutional freedoms have provided for the people of this nation the highest standard of living ever experienced in all history.

Curriculums must constantly be reviewed and revised; students must have a share in policy-making and be given as much independent responsibility as they will respectfully assume. But the few revolutionaries



and disrupters must know that student-made curriculums, student-administered colleges, and student-discovered secrets of science have not produced the scientific and technological developments of this nation that have made it the outstanding world leader since recorded time. I think you will agree that the need for a "blueprint" for change is an imperative. If you and your co-workers fail to provide the "blueprint," it will be provided by others.

The present and oncoming generations must be made cognizant of the fact that "Except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it." If we are to pass on to our posterity, "One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all," the old-fashioned virtues of hard work, honesty, integrity, faith in an Omnipotent God, and courage to serve Him must be re-inculcated in the hearts and minds of our people.

No group in the State is in a better position to touch the hearts and lives of college students than you Presidents and your faculties. Those of us who pass on the torch do so with confidence that you will accept this challenge.

THANK YOU!